

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 1-20 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1 and 13 are independent. In the Final Office Action dated October 20, 2006, Claims 11 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Claims 1, 7-8, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), and Claims 2-6, 9, and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claims 10 and 20 were objected to, but were deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims and Claims 13-19 were allowed. Following this response, Claims 1-9 and 11-19 remain in this application with Claims 10 and 20 being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's objections and rejections in turn.

I. Allowance of Claims

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner pass Claims 13-19 to issue.

II. Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 11 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicants regard as their invention. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. To advance these claims to allowance, however, Claims 11 and 12 have been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments overcome this rejection, add no new matter, and do not narrow the claimed subject matter.

III. Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1, 7-8, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and Claims 2-6, 9, and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. To advance these claims to allowance, however, Claims 1 and 9 have been amended. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments overcome these rejections, add no new matter. In particular, Claim 1 has been amended to include the allowed subject matter from Claim 20. Furthermore, Claim 9 has been rewritten in independent form and amended to include the allowed subject matter from Claim 10. Accordingly, independent Claims 1 and 9 each patentably distinguishes the present invention over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 1 and 9.

Dependent Claims 2-8 and 11-12 are also allowable at least for the reasons described above regarding independent Claims 1 and 9, and by virtue of their respective dependencies upon independent Claims 1 and 9. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of dependent Claims 2-8 and 11-12.

IV. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment After Final be entered by the Examiner, placing the claims in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully submit that the proposed amendments of the claims do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the

claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Finally, Applicants respectfully submit that the entry of the Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims, as amended, are patentable over the cited references. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Official Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Official Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability. Furthermore, the Final Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Final Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this amendment and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 13-2725.

Respectfully submitted,
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